Sources


• Richard Hamming, “You and your research.” Transcription of the Bell Communications Research Colloquium Seminar, March 7, 1986.

Advisors

• Temporary advisors
• Research advisors
• Approaching a potential advisor
• Secondary/informal “advisors”
• Changing advisors
Questions to Ask Faculty

• Are you taking on new (M.S./Ph.D.) students?
• Do you have RA funding? For how long into the future?
• What research areas are you working in?
• Do you have specific open problems you are looking for students to work on?
• Do you generally suggest research topics to your students or expect them to find their own topics?
• Are you willing to advise a thesis/dissertation in an area not directly related to your current research projects?
• Are you willing to advise an interdisciplinary thesis/dissertation, or to co-adviser?
• Have you (recently) graduated any (M.S./Ph.D.) students?
Questions to Ask Students

• Is Prof. X accessible?
  – How much time does Prof. X spend with you?
  – In what contexts (individual meetings, lab meetings, etc.)?
• Do Prof. X’s students finish quickly?
• Do Prof. X’s students publish in top conferences and journals?
• Does Prof. X give credit to students for their work?
• Is Prof. X consistent in expectations and directions?
• Is Prof. X reasonable in the amount of work expected?
• Do students respect Prof. X intellectually?

(From Peters, p. 46-47)
Expectations

• You can reasonably expect your advisor to:
  – Be available on a somewhat regular schedule
  – Suggest courses and schedules
  – Help you to select and solve research topics
  – Suggest committee members
  – Provide feedback on written work and work in progress
  – Suggest possible solutions to research problems
  – Encourage you to publish
  – Write letters of reference

• Your advisor may also:
  – Provide financial support (stipends and travel money)
  – Provide career advice
  – Help you find a job
Expectations

Your advisor can reasonably expect you to:

– Develop ideas independently
– Do what you say you will do, in a reasonable timeframe
– Make (reasonably) continuous progress
– Go beyond the minimum amount of work
– Be pro-active in pursuing ideas and looking for resources
– Ask for help when you need it
– Meet relevant deadlines, even if heroic short-term effort is required
Expectations

Your advisor may also expect you to:

– Provide written progress reports
– Review papers, both theirs and others’
– Work with other students in the lab
– Publish and make presentations
– Contribute to grant proposals
Not-so-Great Expectations

• Your advisor should not expect you to:
  – Perform excessive administrative tasks or paperwork
  – Contribute to research without authorship
  – Consistently work unreasonably long hours
  – Have no life outside of the lab

• You should not expect your advisor to:
  – Constantly remind you what you need to be doing
  – Solve every problem you encounter
  – Be familiar with every aspect of your research problem
  – Provide unlimited resources (time, money, equipment...).
In the Unlikely Event...

• What if your advisor is seriously abusing or neglecting you?
  – Talk to the GPD
  – Talk to another faculty member you trust
  – Change advisors
  – Talk to the department chair
  – Talk to the Associate Dean
  – File a formal complaint